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The Senators Scold Billy and Jimmy

The Senate investigation of Billy Carter's Libyan connection ended last week much the way it had begun: with plenty of criticism for poor judgment—and little else. In a 249-page report, the nine-member subcommittee said Billy's conduct merited "severe criticism." It blamed the President and some of his senior aides both for their "ill-advised" use of Billy to enlist Libyan aid in the Iran hostage crisis and for various sins of "omission" that might have given Libyan officials a false impression of Billy's influence in Washington. But it found no evidence that anyone at the White House had done anything illegal—or even seriously improper—to help the President's younger brother. "When we started out . . . I thought we might very well have a bear by the tail," said Sen. Claiborne Pell of Rhode Island. "At the end of eight weeks, I've come to the conclusion that we really had a mouse."

The subcommittee concluded that Libyan officials cultivated Billy's friendship in an attempt to gain influence in Washington; by responding to their overtures, it charged, Billy acted "contrary to the interests of the . . . United States." The report conceded that in fact Billy had absolutely no impact on U.S. policy, but it criticized the President for not making that clear. "The President should have either issued a public statement or sent a private message to the Libyan Government . . . that Billy Carter did not represent the United States," it argued. If anything, the report said, the White House gave precisely the opposite impression by using Billy last November to arrange a meeting between a Libyan diplomat and national-security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski.

Risk: The subcommittee also had harsh words for the way the Administration reacted after Billy's involvement with the Libyans became apparent. In warning Billy last spring that the government was aware he had made a deal with an oil company to buy Libyan crude, Brzezinski risked

compromising intelligence sources and undermining the Justice Department's investigation of Billy. So did CIA director Stansfield Turner, who kept intelligence on the deal from the FBI, and Attorney General Benjamin Civiletti, who withheld from his own investigators information about Billy's \$220,000 "loan" from the Libyans and who also discussed the case briefly with the President. Though there was no evidence of a Watergate-style cover-up, the report said the effect of these actions was "to protect the President from taking personal responsibility" for the problem.

The subcommittee staff may well pursue several loose ends, including a contention by Sen. Bob Dole of Kansas that Billy may have played a role in preventing an Egyptian invasion of Libya—and that a business associate of his had privileged access to the White House. Privately, however, members say the panel has probably met for the last time. Said staff counsel Philip Tone: "I think we have the essentials of the story."

ALLAN J. MAYER with KIM WILLENSON
in Washington